



## ***SUCCESS STORY*** ***Portland District Office***

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### **Doing the right things**

### **2010 SBA Small Business Person of the Year**



The Sweetwater Company, known as EARTH2O began business operations in the small town of Culver, OR in 1991. In June of 1999, Steve Emery was recruited as President with the charge of bringing financial recovery to the company. Over the next four years he kept the company focused on improving operational efficiencies, distribution and geographic expansion and creative packaging. In 2004, EARTH2O became the first packaging company in the United States to eliminate the use of cardboard in single serve cases eliminating over 360,000 pounds of unnecessary packaging. In 2006, Emery offered to purchase the company and secured a financial partner in his former college roommate and

Seattle based attorney, Ted Buck. Emery and Buck saved 38 jobs in the small community of Culver, OR. Emery's team went to work changing the targeted distribution model and focusing on the 5-gallon home and office water delivery business. In 2007, with the assistance of an SBA loan, the company acquired its facility. Focused on continuous improvement, the EARTH2O team designed a plan to reduce waste and emissions in every process of their business. The team found that the major competitive water companies used reverse osmosis processes, which wasted between 3 gallons to 9 gallons of water, to make a gallon of finished product. Accordingly, they set the goal of having the lowest amount of emissions and waste produced by any packaged beverage company anywhere.

It is Emery's core belief that by doing the right things the company will thrive and change the way his competitors do business and it has. The company's success is driven by a connection with the Northwest consumer who understands what makes EARTH2O different. Those values allow the company to sell a superior product at an affordable price, which is appreciated by the national grocery chains that not only promote EARTH2O but have also contracted with the company to produce some of their own brands of water.

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